

Now, these overpayments occur because Medicare reimburses doctors according to the published average wholesale price, the so-called sticker price, for drugs. Few doctors, however, actually pay the full sticker price. In fact, some pay just one-tenth of the published price. That's why I'm sending to Congress again the same legislation I sent last year, legislation that will ensure that doctors are reimbursed no more and no less than the price they themselves pay for the medicines they give Medicare patients. While a more modest version of this bill passed last summer, the savings to taxpayers is not nearly enough. My bill will save \$700 million over the next 5 years, and I urge Congress to pass it.

There must be no room for waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare. Only by putting a permanent stop to it can we honor our parents, protect our taxpayers, and build a world-class health care system for the 21st century.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Arkansas Democratic National Committee Dinner

December 13, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, Maurice, not only for chairing this dinner but for never saying no for 6 years or more now, in good times and bad. Thank you, Alan Solomont, for your leadership and those wonderful, thoughtful, and highly perceptive remarks. *[Laughter]*

I think these other folks are about to get us, don't you? I think he's finally figured it out.

I'd like to thank all the non-Arkansans who are here tonight, particularly those who have positions in our party—Tom and Jill Hendrickson from North Carolina. And I'd like to thank Jack and Phyllis Rosen for being here. Jack's been involved with our financial efforts for a long time at the DNC, and this is his very last event. He wanted to go out with a home touch. So thank you especially, Jack, for doing that.

I probably shouldn't do this, but I'm going to try to acknowledge the Arkansans in the

administration who are here. If I omit you and you quit, I will never speak to you again. *[Laughter]* I am doing my best. *[Laughter]* Normally, Presidents don't have to remember this stuff. *[Laughter]* But I think it's important.

I just want you to get a feel for how many people are here: Mack and Donna McLarty, of course; Bruce Lindsey; Nancy Hernreich; Marsha Scott; Bob Nash and Janis Kearney; Stephanie Streett, Mary Streett; Catherine Grundin; Patsy Thomasson; Ann and Grady McCoy. Ben Johnson told me he was from Arkansas tonight, that he was born in Marion and his wife, Jacqueline, said she was born in Joiner—*[laughter]*—and I'd say that qualifies. *[Laughter]* Steve and Jennifer Ronnel; Darren and Vivian Peters. And in the administration, of course, Secretary Slater and Cassandra; James Lee and Lea Ellen Witt; Hershel Gober and Mary Lou Keener; Harold and Arlee Gist; Wilbur Peer; Gloria Cabe has done great work for us; and in the DNC, Carroll and Joyce Willis; Lottie Shackelford; Mary Anne Salmon.

I'm so glad they're here. There are others I wish were here tonight. I wish Maurice Smith and Betsy Wright and Bill Clark and David Matthews and Linda Dixon and a host of other people could be here. But I want to thank you, all of you—those of you in the administration, those of you who have been in the administration, and most of all, those of you without whom there never would have been an administration. I thank you very much.

I don't want to embarrass him, but about 2 hours before I came over here tonight I was finishing up some paper work in my office. And Nancy always collects interesting letters that come from people from home and puts them in a little folder for me, and I get them at least once a week. And at the top of the folder was a letter that Richard Mason just wrote to the Wall Street Journal. And it said, "I got about as much chance of getting this letter printed as Dan Quayle does of getting elected President." *[Laughter]*

But he went on to say he was a businessman; he had read the Journal faithfully for years. He said, "For 5 years I've watched you bad-mouth my President and my State and

say things that weren't true. And if your advice on business is as bad as your understanding of politics, I'll be in deep trouble if I keep reading this newspaper." [Laughter] "Please cancel my subscription." [Laughter]

I did what I always do. You know, I was saying, "But, Richard, you know, you can't blame the editorial page. They have good articles, all that kind of stuff." I was making my good Government argument. He said, "Look, the economy is better. The world is at peace. The crime rate is down. The country is in great shape. Sooner or later some of those people that are trying to tear your guts out and lying about our State are going to have to fess up and admit it. Get over it, the country is in better shape. This is working."

Since under our new policy all these are covered by the press, they may have to run your letter now, Richard. [Laughter] We'll see.

Let me say to all of you, when I was getting ready to come over here tonight—and I'm sorry Hillary is not here, but she is, to put it mildly, under the weather, and she said to send you her love—but when I was getting ready to come over here, I was reliving many of the things that have happened since October 3d of 1991 when I declared for President.

I remember how people sneeringly referred to me as the Governor of a small southern State. I remember how people talked about how we had failed to do all these things. I remember when I was pronounced dead before arrival in New Hampshire. And the Arkansas Travelers, who had been traveling all around the country anyway—and then all of a sudden, 150 people just dropped everything they were doing at home and came to New Hampshire and went around knocking on people's doors, total strangers, introducing themselves, saying, "This is my Governor; you cannot do this. Don't let them stampede you into this. Don't one more time let the kind of negative, hateful, personality-destroying politics that has kept our country back—don't do it one more time." One hundred fifty people up there in colder weather, some of them, than they had ever been in their lives—[laughter]—knocking on doors in New Hampshire.

I remember when that great ad appeared in the Manchester Union Leader, with hundreds of Arkansans' names and their phone numbers, saying, "Instead of believing what they're saying about him, if you want to know about this guy, call me." I will never forget that.

I remember how surprised—the people that ran against me in '92 are, by and large, good friends of mine now, and I remember how surprised they were that we kept doing well in odd places. And it took them a long time to figure out that 25 percent of the voters in Chicago were from Arkansas. [Laughter] That there was something to be said for being poor throughout the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties. [Laughter] I keep waiting any day now for all of them to be subpoenaed by Mr. Starr. [Laughter] You know, a 50-year-old conspiracy to take over the White House—[laughter]—which started with our running people out of Arkansas back in the thirties and forties in a dark and devious way.

I came upon a little town outside Flint, Michigan, one day, full of auto workers. And literally 90 percent of them had roots in Arkansas, and I thought to myself today, those people are going to be called to testify any minute now. [Laughter] There's a presumption there's something wrong with them; it was some dark plot.

I was in the Bronx—did you see the pictures, where I went back to the Bronx to the place where President Reagan said it looked like London during the Blitz, and now it looks like a neighborhood any American would be proud to live in—to celebrate what this community organization had done. They're called the Mid-Bronx Desperadoes, because they were so desperate to turn their community around years and years ago. Half the housing this particular group has built has been built since I have been President because of our approach, which is to basically support community groups and people that are working together and let them define their own future.

So I get out; I shake hands with Ralph Porter—he's the current president of the Mid-Bronx Desperadoes—and we are walking down the street in the Bronx. He looked at me and he said, "You know, my wife

worked with your mother at Washita Hospital for 15 years—[laughter]—and I graduated from Langston High School in Hot Springs.” [Laughter] I said, “No, they’ll never believe this.” [Laughter] I hope Ralph doesn’t get a subpoena. [Laughter]

And he went on to tell me that his mother was living in the Bronx and was ill, and he’d been living in—he grew up in Hot Springs and his wife worked in the hospital with Mother; and that he went to see about his mother, and he’s decided the Bronx is in terrible shape and that God wanted him to be in the Bronx and help turn it around. And I’m telling you, it will take your breath away if you could walk down some of these streets, not just nice houses but safe streets, clean streets, going to remodeled schools that are working, where communities that were given up for dead are working.

And sometimes I think what our adversaries, that are almost pathologically obsessed with personal destruction, don’t get is that that’s what politics is about. That’s what you taught me. That’s why we’re all here after 5 years and that’s why the country is in better shape. Politics is about real people and their hopes and their dreams. So, to me, all this stuff—you all always say, “Gosh, I don’t know how you put up with it.” How do you put up with mosquitoes in summertime in Arkansas? [Laughter] You just swat them and go on, it’s a part of living. That’s what you do. If rice farmers thought farming rice was about mosquitoes, we’d all starve. [Laughter] It’s about planting rice and bringing it in when harvest comes. Politics is about people and their dreams and building a better future. And that’s what you taught me.

All the stories—I saw a great little special on one of the television networks the other night, that the State of Tennessee is now sponsoring a story-telling contest every year. And there was a very, very large African-American woman telling stories, and all these east Tennessee hill people were sitting around the circle listening to her, and their eyes were big as dollars, and they were all—and they were taking turns telling stories, and then they’d pick a winner. And I thought to myself, it would do this town a lot of good if we had a story-telling contest every year—

[laughter]—to remind people about what life is all about.

So they were telling their stories. You want to know why we survived up here? Because I still remember the stories. I got to telling some of the young people that work for me the other day in the White House stories about my first two or three campaigns in Arkansas; they were laughing so hard they had tears in their eyes. [Laughter] When David Pryor and I started, you had to know that kind of stuff. I mean, you were expected to know people and you cared about their parents and their children and their brothers and their sisters. You knew that misfortune happened. It wasn’t a denigrating thing to say you felt someone’s pain; that just meant you were a real live human being with blood flowing in your veins and you had some imagination about what life was all about.

And I just want you to know that that’s what we’ve tried to do here. If I hadn’t been Governor of Arkansas in the time I was—and keep in mind, until the year I ran for President, every single month I was Governor but one, the unemployment rate in our State was higher than the national average—every single month. And I stood on those factory lines when people came off the line for the very last time before they shut down in the recession of the eighties. I knew farmers that had gone broke. I understood what things happened to people when older people couldn’t buy medicine and younger people couldn’t afford to send their children to the dentist.

I understood those things because you taught me them, and I knew what politics was about. And I ran for a very clear reason: I thought our country was divided and drifting, that we were not succeeding, that we were clearly the greatest country in human history, and that we were too dominated, completely paralyzed, and in the grip of the mosquitoes instead of the planting. That’s what I thought then. And so we decided that we would endure the mosquitoes so that we could plant and reap. And I think it’s been worth the effort.

When you go home tonight I want you to think about this: You were standing and freezing your feet off in New Hampshire in ’92, or you’ve had to do some other kind of

service above and beyond the call since then—you gave us the chance to serve, and your country has the lowest unemployment rate in 24 years. That's the statistic. The story is, there's 14 million people out there with jobs who didn't have them before, and every one of them has got a story. There's 3.8 million people who were on welfare when I became President, who are now living in homes, with paychecks, and they've got a different story. There are over 13 million people who got to claim the benefits of the family and medical leave law when a baby was born or a parent was sick.

There are 8½ million people whose pensions were gone that were rescued in one of Senator Pryor's last legislative acts, great legislative acts, when we reformed the pension system, and we saved 40 million other people's pensions from having to worry about it—8 million people who saved their retirement. That's a story. There's 250,000 people with criminal records or mental health histories who couldn't buy handguns because we passed the Brady bill, and we don't know how many people are alive because of that, and they're out telling stories tonight of their lives because we did that.

We set aside more land—I'd forgotten this until I read Richard's letter—we set aside more land in national trusts in one form or another than any administration in the history of America, except the two Roosevelts'. And there will be millions and millions of people just before the end of this decade that will be someplace or another having an experience with nature and God and their families because of that, that they would not have had. And that will become part of their story.

The air is cleaner. The water is cleaner. The food is safer. There are fewer little children living next to toxic waste dumps. And every one of them will have a different story now.

We're about to pass another Christmas in Bosnia, where we no longer have the bloodiest conflict since the end of World War II. We've made another year in Haiti. We're on the verge of seeing a profound and permanent peace, I hope, in Ireland this coming year. We've made real steps in making the world less likely to be subject to chemical

warfare last year—this year, when we ratified the Chemical Weapons Treaty.

This race initiative—a lot of people say it's just talk; I'd rather see people talking than fighting—it's not just talk; it's a lot more than that. But there's something to be said for that. The more complicated and different this country gets, and the more contentious and conflict-oriented the larger means of communications get, the more important it is for people who are different to sit down and talk to one another and understand their stories and understand that we have things that bind us together that are even more important than the very interesting things about us which are different, one from another. And that's what this whole race initiative is all about.

We've got a lot of challenges in the world. The challenge in Iraq, the general challenge of weapons of mass destruction, the chemical and biological weapons. They could bother our kids a lot, and we're going to work hard to see that they don't. We've got financial upheavals in Asia now. And since Thanksgiving, Secretary Rubin and I have been talking at all kinds of odd hours because of the time difference in Asia and here. I was on the phone last night at 11 to Asia. But we're managing the best we can.

And there are lots of other things we have to deal with: the challenge of the entitlement, the challenge of educational excellence in our public schools, the challenge of extending health care further.

But you just look at this balanced budget. All the other politicians, I heard them all talk about balancing the budget up here for years; it just got worse. The deficit has been cut by 92 percent before we passed the Balanced Budget Act. Now we've got a balanced budget bill that gives a tax credit or a scholarship to virtually every person who needs to go to college in America. We can literally say we've opened the doors of college to everyone. The balanced budget has the biggest increase in aid to go to college since the GI bill passed in 1945. That will make a lot of different stories. It has the biggest increase in health care for children since Medicaid was enacted in 1965. Five million more kids in working families with modest incomes will be able to get health insurance. Who knows how many of

them will live to be adults because of it. Who knows how many of them will be healthier intellectually and physically and emotionally because of it. They'll all have a slightly different story, and it will be better. That's what I want you to think about.

The reason it's important for you to be here is that part of the counterbattle, the mosquito biting, this year was a calculated, determined effort to use the hearing process and the legal process to force all the Democrats—and especially people associated with the party—to hire a lawyer every 15 seconds in the hope that we'd never have another penny to spend on campaigns. Somebody pointed out I'd been to so many fundraisers in the last year that I'd gotten tired a time or two, and I plead guilty to that. It's okay to get tired; you just can't give in.

So when you go home and people ask you why you did this, say because they tried to end the two-party system in America by forcing the Democrats to spend all their money hiring lawyers, and you think the two-party system is a pretty good idea, especially since one party, the one you belong to, was right about the deficit, was right about the economy, was right about crime, was right about welfare, was right about so many things, and that's why this country is in better shape today, and you think that's a pretty good indication about which party ought to be able to lead us into the new century. That's why you're here, and that's why I'm very proud of you.

Let me just say, lastly, I want you to go back home and tell the people who aren't here what I said tonight. And remind them, because they're a long way away, never to get confused between the mosquitoes and the planting, because as soon as you do you won't be able to bring in the crop. We have brought in the crop, and you made it possible, and I'm very, very proud of you.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 p.m. at the Decatur House. In his remarks, he referred to Maurice Mitchell, Arkansas Democratic fundraiser; Alan D. Solomont, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; C. Thomas Hendrickson, chair, Democratic Business Council, and his wife, Jill; Jack Rosen, chairman, national finance council, Democratic National Com-

mittee, and his wife, Phyllis, member, President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities; Kenneth Starr, Whitewater independent counsel; Ralph Porter, executive director, Mid-Bronx Desperadoes; and former Senator David H. Pryor of Arkansas.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"

December 14, 1997

Ladies and gentlemen, first let me begin by thanking Bob and Suzanne and all their whole network family for what has been a wonderful show. Thank you, Glenn Close; thank you, Aaliyah; thank you, Shirley Caesar; Deana Carter; Hanson; Thomas Hampson; the Eastern Choir; and of course, our Naval Academy Glee Club; the Army Herald Trumpets; our musicians and choir over there; and thank you to George and Michael Stevens for the wonderful job they do every year, and especially this year.

Hillary and I look forward to celebrating "Christmas in Washington" every year. It gets us in the holiday spirit. If we're not in now, we don't have a chance. *[Laughter]* It also gives us another chance to thank the Children's National Medical Center for the outstanding work that all of them do on behalf of our Nation's children.

More than any other holiday, Christmas is for our children. We revel in their excitement. We rejoice in their growth. We renew our pledge to help them make the most of their God-given gifts. It all began with the miracle of a child, born in a manger, who grew to teach a lesson of peace that has guided us for 2,000 years now. It continues to light our journey toward a new century and a new millennium. Every child is a miracle, and it is for their futures that we must all dedicate ourselves to work for that universal, timeless vision of peace in every nation, in every community, and, most important, in every heart.

Hillary and I and Chelsea wish you all a joyous holiday and a very happy new year. Thank you. God bless you. May the magic of Christmas be always with you.